



**Montgomery County, MD  
Commission on People with Disabilities  
Meeting Summary Minutes  
June 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**Welcome and Approval of May Meeting Summary Minutes:**

Trish Gallalee, Chair, convened the meeting. Charlie Crawford, Vice Chair, made a motion to accept the minutes as written. Tim Markwood, Commissioner, seconded the motion. A vote was taken and the May Meeting Summary Minutes were unanimously approved.

**Moment of Silence for [John G. Miers](#)**

John Miers passed away from a brain tumor on June 2, 2011. He had served on the Commission since 2001 and was Vice Chair for two years. He was a member of the Board of Directors for St. Luke's House and a tireless advocate for people with chronic mental illness. He believed that he was able to make a difference in the lives of persons with disabilities through his participation on the Commission. His position was that the Commission is making significant progress in the ways in which Montgomery County persons with disabilities are accepted, treated, and encouraged to be full participants in our county. He was a member of the Health and Wellness Committee, served as the Commission Liaison to the Mental Health Advisory Committee, and represented the Commission on the Community Health Improvement Process (CHIP). He received the County's 2008 Path of Achievement Award for Advocacy. He focused much of his work on accessibility for houses of worship, Metro and Ride On accessibility, preferential hiring of persons with disabilities, and universal design for our new structures. He is remembered for saying a friendly "Good Morning" no matter the time of day and always having a smile and a friendly word of encouragement. The Commission will send a letter of acknowledgement and appreciation to John's family.

**Transit Updates and Accessibility – Carolyn Biggins, Chief, and Steve Wells, Operations Chief, Division of Transit Services (DTS), Montgomery County Department of Transportation (DOT)**

Carolyn Biggins gave a brief overview of the Ride On system. Ride On has a fleet of 339 buses, 278 of which operate during the peak periods. 100% of all buses are wheelchair accessible and ADA compliant. 76% of residents and 89% of County employees have access to a bus stop within a quarter mile of where they live.

Ride On operates 76 routes with an annual rider ship of 27.9 million passengers, or approximately 91,000 passengers daily. Ride On provides more bus service than Metrobus and logs over a million hours of bus service annually. 60% of service is provided on arterial roads (high-capacity urban roads) and trunk lines and 40% is provided on collector roads (low to moderate-capacity roads) and feeder lines to the rail system creating an inter-connected network between Ride On, Metrobus, Metrorail and MARC.

The entire bus fleet is outfitted with Computer Aided Dispatch/Automatic Vehicle Location (CAD/AVL) that allows dispatchers to keep track of where a bus is at all times. Annunciators are also located on all buses that voice announce each upcoming bus stop location. CAD/AVL and Trapeze, a new automated scheduling system, send information to the annunciators for bus stop announcements. Charlie Crawford, Commissioner, contacted DTS about an issue regarding the bus stop announcements not being broadcasted by the annunciators or the bus operators.

40% of the fleet is alternatively fueled either with compressed natural gas or hybrid technology. DOT is working to outfit all buses with security cameras. 90% of buses currently have them installed. DOT has also switched 70% of their buses to low floor buses to reduce the number of buses with lifts as they require more maintenance. All future bus purchases will have low floors.

Several years ago, DOT conducted a County-wide assessment of all 5,000 bus stops for safety and ADA access and developed a program for the repairs. The County Council gave DOT \$11M to perform updates. So far, 1,900 stops have been improved.

In the area of operations, DOT maintains a consistent fair policy with Metrobus and other regional operators. There has been a dramatic increase in the usage of the SmarTrip<sup>®</sup> card, which allows for travelers to pay for Metrorail, Metrobus, Ride On and parking at Metro stations.

Ride On instructors are trained by the National Transit Institute. Trainers focus on four areas: mobility device securement, stop announcements, communicating with sensitivity, and service animals. DOT has an accident review policy and presents safety awards to bus drivers.

DTS is developing real time information to be posted on the web as well as accessed on smart phones. The information will provide an actual estimated time of arrival. DTS is marking all bus stop signs with the appropriate bus stop numbers. Users can input this information into the web to receive real time feedback regarding bus arrival times for the next few buses. Real time electronic signs will also be installed at select locations, including the Silver Spring Transit Center when it opens next year. They will also be deploying a new Interactive Voice Response (IVR) automated system that will interact with telephone callers and allow riders to access route information.

MC311 now handles all Ride On calls. They field approximately 5,000 calls per month. 90% of those calls are about trip information. The quickest way to file a complaint is to call 311. DTS uses 311's software to track performance. Carolyn stated that performance measures are based on missed trips, on-time performance, ridership, and complaints. Trish Gallalee, Chair, reminded Commissioners to also report compliments and instances of good experiences.

DTS has a Transit Advisory Group comprised of 12 to 15 residents who use Ride On on a regular basis. The group meets quarterly. New members are appointed every two years. Members are tasked with reporting on issues and investigating complaints.

DTS has a contract through an outside organization that provides residents for a Mystery Rider Program. The individuals are unknown to bus operators and grade performance on the four best practice issues mentioned in training. DTS then receives monthly reports. When the program first began, a person with a disability was supposed to be one of the mystery riders. Steve is unsure if there is currently a mystery rider with a disability. The program also reports on the County's taxi service.

Carolyn opened the floor to questions.

Mark Maxin, Commissioner, inquired about the wait time between buses. Steve explained that bus operators are trained to communicate to DTS if they will be late by ten minutes or more. Routes are then altered to maximize the efficiency as far as the number of vehicles in operation. Due to budget cuts, there are no stand-by buses available to assist with delays as all buses are currently being used on routes. Carolyn added that another reason for decreased service was due to the Ride On budget cuts the past few years. DTS was unable to hire any new bus operators due to the hiring freeze. Since last July, 2011, Ride On has been in an expedited hiring mode in order to hire more bus operators to fill the gap. Mark also asked about the grievance process. There is limited disciplinary action that can be taken when a complaint is filed via a phone call. It is better to file a complaint via e-mail or hand-signed letter. 95% - 98% of disciplinary actions are handled prior to a hearing.

Cindy Buddington, Commissioner, noted that she prefers the buses with the ramp in the back rather than the lift. She also reported that the bus location on the corner of Shady Grove Road and 355 does not have a temporary shelter and has safety issues concerning visibility. Steve stated that DTS is looking to eventually get rid of the lift buses and replace them with traditional transit coaches that have low floors and use a ramp instead of a lift. Damien Gregory, Travel Trainer, Independence Now, noted that he has had several instances where the lift has broken down while he was using it. Steve acknowledged that the lifts are prone to breaking

down due to the age of the equipment and lack of available parts for repair. Bus operators are instructed to cycle their lift or ramp at some point during the day.

#### Handouts:

- [Transit Customer Rights and Responsibilities](#) - Bookmark details the rights guaranteed to transit customers under the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and the responsibilities passengers have when using community transportation.
- [2010 Transit Operator's Pocket Guide](#) - Quick reference guide for fixed-route bus operators addresses ADA requirements, such as priority seating and stop announcements.

#### Chair and Vice Chair Report:

Trish Gallalee, Chair, reminded Commissioners that CPWD does not have Full Commission Meetings in July or August. Steering Committee Meetings will still be held as scheduled. Committee and work group projects for the summer will be discussed at the next Steering Committee Meeting. Due to a calendar conflict, the June Steering Committee Meeting has been rescheduled to Wednesday, June 29<sup>th</sup>.

#### Committee Reports:

Seth Morgan, Commissioner, reported on the disability parking meeting he attended on June 7<sup>th</sup>. Rick Siebert, Chief, Management Services & Property Development Section, DOT, Division of Parking Management, reported that he recently met with Bernadette DiPino, Chief of Police, Ocean City, Maryland, where they've instituted a successful volunteer parking enforcement program. They've had no significant problems with the program. It was noted that the populations of Ocean City and Montgomery County vary as Ocean City has an older population as well as less congestion outside of the immediate waterfront area. Seth pointed out that, nationally, volunteer programs have been successful even in congested, non-retiree based communities such as Huntington, New York.

A discussion was held regarding the feasibility of having a similar volunteer program in Montgomery County. A program would necessitate training of volunteers by Montgomery County Police and DOT. Training would include the issue of conflict avoidance and the proper way to fill out citations so they're defensible in court. Volunteers would need to make themselves available for court appearances as needed when citations are challenged. Police raised concerns over how to verify that a person with a placard or tag has a disability. The Maryland Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) requires that an individual must always have their copy of the MVA Disability Parking Certification in their possession whenever they use the placard or plates. This certification must be presented to law enforcement, or an agent that is designated by the State, upon request. Commissioners expressed their concern that individuals may become defensive or aggressive when questioned about the validity of their disability placard or tag. There was discussion about having media coverage of the program during initial orientation and early deployment of volunteers to educate the public about the program.

Seth noted that the project is ongoing and subject to change. At this point, the feasibility of volunteer program is still being researched. The group will continue to meet as needed.

Angela Washington, Ex-Officio Member, Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Manager, Office of Human Resources, reported that the County is currently in a hiring freeze and all open positions are being filled by County employees whose positions were eliminated due to budget cuts, i.e. Reduction-In-Force (RIF). She recently attended a meeting with Councilmember Phil Andrews to discuss strategies for a Charter Amendment that is similar to the Federal Government Schedule A program. They are currently researching [New York City's 55-A Program for Persons with Disabilities](#) - a New York State Civil Service Law that permits municipalities to employ persons, who have been certified as physically or mentally disabled, in civil service positions on a non-competitive basis.

Jackie Simon, Commissioner, reported on the Design for Life Montgomery meeting held May 13<sup>th</sup>. Robert Kaufman is the new Associate Director of Government Affairs, Maryland National Capital Building Industry Association. A number of the work group members will be interviewed for an article in the MNCBIA *Building*

magazine. There will be another meeting held June 24<sup>th</sup> – location to be determined. Jackie also made a presentation to the Human Rights Commission. They have not made a decision yet as to whether or not to support a mandatory program.

**New Business:** None.

**Action Item Review:** None.

**Announcements:** None.

**Community Speaks:**

Selena Mendy Singleton, District Director from the Office of Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards, introduced herself to the Commission. She noted that Congresswoman Edwards represents Maryland's 4th Congressional District comprising portions of Prince George's and Montgomery Counties, and has offices in Silver Spring and Suitland. Congresswoman Edwards recently held her annual non-profit forum and would have liked to have seen more participation from the disability community. She wanted to reach out to the Commission, and offered to speak with groups, organizations, non-profits, and individuals at events and meetings.

**Meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.**

**Next Full Commission Meeting:** Wednesday, September 14<sup>th</sup>, 2011 – Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, MD – Lobby Auditorium, 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

**Steering Committee Meeting:** Wednesday, September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2011 – 401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD – 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Tan Conference Room, 5:30 p.m. to 6:30 p.m.

Submitted by: Carly Clem, Office Services Coordinator  
Betsy Luecking, Disability Policy Specialist